



# The Geeks Shall Inherit the Earth: Popularity, Quirk Theory, and Why Outsiders Thrive After High School

By Alexandra Robbins

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Voted **BEST NONFICTION BOOK OF 2011** at Goodreads. A New York Times bestseller. In a smart, entertaining, reassuring book that reads like fiction, Alexandra Robbins manages to cross *Gossip Girl* with *Freaks and Geeks* and explain the fascinating psychology and science behind popularity and outcasthood. She reveals that the things that set students apart in high school are the things that help them stand out later in life. Robbins follows seven real people grappling with the uncertainties of high school social life, including:

- **The Loner**, who has withdrawn from classmates since they persuaded her to unwittingly join her own hate club;
- **The Popular Bitch**, a cheerleading captain both seduced by and trapped within her clique's perceived prestige;
- **The Nerd**, whose differences cause students to laugh at him and his mother to needle him for not being "normal";
- **The New Girl**, determined to stay positive as classmates harass her for her mannerisms and target her because of her race;
- **The Gamer**, an underachiever in danger of not graduating, despite his intellect and his yearning to connect with other students;
- **The Weird Girl**, who battles discrimination and gossip politics in school but leads a joyous life outside of it;
- **The Band Geek**, who is alternately branded too serious and too emo, yet annually runs for class president.

In the middle of the year, Robbins surprises her subjects with a secret challenge--experiments that force them to change how classmates see them.

Robbins intertwines these narratives--often triumphant, occasionally heartbreaking, and always captivating--with essays exploring subjects like the secrets of popularity, being excluded doesn't mean there's anything wrong with you, why outsiders succeed, how schools make the social scene worse--and how to fix it.

*The Geeks Shall Inherit the Earth* is not just essential reading for students, teachers, parents, and anyone who deals with teenagers, but for all of us, because

at some point in our lives we've all been on the outside looking in.

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Robbins follows her previous book, *The Overachievers: The Secret Life of Driven Kids*, with this insightful and timely look at the current state of America's teenage wasteland commonly known as "high school." Robbins follows the lives of seven students across the nation with very different and unique personalities—from "the gamer" and "the band geek" to "the popular bitch" and "the new girl"—as well as interviewing hundreds of other students, teachers, and counselors from a range of public, private, urban, rural, technical, college prep, and arts schools to prove what she calls her "Quirk Theory:" that "Many of the differences that cause a student to be excluded in school are the identical traits or real-world skills that others will value, love, respect, or find compelling about that person in adulthood and outside of the school setting." Robbins's keen eye shows us how the eternal adolescent struggle between individuality and inclusion lures many students—and teachers—into a mindless "groupthink" about what is conventionally popular and acceptable behavior. At the same time, she shows how the qualities that set her subjects apart from their classmates are the same qualities that make them stand out in positive ways. She ends with an effective list of tips for parents, teachers, students, and schools on how to support and encourage students who value "original thought and expression." (May)

Review

**Insightful and timely**...Robbins' keen eye shows...how the qualities that set her subjects apart [also] make them stand out in positive ways. She ends with **an effective list of tips** for parents, teachers, students, and schools. --Publishers Weekly

An **excellent** overview of the complex social environment of high school, told in an accessible and **often humorous and touching** manner...Very highly recommended. --Library Journal **Starred Review**

**Offers real hope** to adolescents... The **author has a gift for writing fact like fiction**...and the students and their stories are thoroughly engaging... These stories are not just entertaining but important. --Kirkus Reviews

**A fascinating read**, and an important one for parents. **I highly recommend this book.** --Petoskey New-Review

**Required reading** for anyone who has ever felt left out...or misunderstood. Schools everywhere would do well to incorporate it into their curriculum.. Robbins' ode to the cafeteria fringe will have you **laughing, cheering, shocked.** --Chicago Sun-Times

About the Author

**Alexandra Robbins** is a former staff member of *The New Yorker* and the author of two *New York Times* bestsellers. Her work has appeared in publications including *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Washington Post*, *USA Today*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Mademoiselle*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Self*, *Washington Monthly*, *Time Digital*, *Salon*, *Details*, *Shape*, *PC*, *Tennis Week*, and the *Journal of Popular Culture*. She graduated summa cum laude in 1998 from Yale.

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Yvonne Matz:**

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